

JAPAN REPUBLIC CUSTOMS

Greetings:

A bow is the traditional greeting between Japanese. Much can be said with a proper bow. Persons wishing to show respect or humility bow lower than the other person. A handshake is most appropriate for foreign visitors.

The Japanese are formal, and titles are important in introductions. A family name is used with the suffix -*san*. So, Mr. Ogushi would be called *Ogushi-san* in Japan.

The greetings Japanese use depend on the relationship. A worker might greet a superior with *Ohayougozaimasu* (Good morning), but he or she would greet a customer with *Irasshaimase* (Welcome). When business representatives meet for the first time, they may tell each other *Hajimemashite* (Nice to meet you). *Konnichiwa* ("Hello" or "Good day") is a standard greeting. *Ohayou* (an informal "Good morning") and *Genki?* (How's it going?) are common casual greetings among youth.

Gestures:

Legs may be crossed at the knee or ankle, but placing an ankle over a knee is considered improper.

One beckons by waving all fingers with the palm down. It is polite to point with the entire hand rather than the index finger. Shaking one hand from side to side with the palm forward means "no."

People refer to themselves by pointing an index finger at their nose. Laughter does not necessarily signify joy or amusement; it can also be a sign of embarrassment. One covers one's mouth when using a toothpick.

Holidays:

Japan's three major holiday seasons are the New Year, Golden Week, and Obon Festival. At the New Year, Japanese take an extended holiday from the last day or two in December to about the third of January. Golden Week (29 April–5 May) combines the holidays of Showa Day (29 April, honoring Emperor Hirohito), Constitution Day (3 May), Greenery Day (4 May, a day to celebrate nature's beauty), and Children's Day (5 May). Obon Festival takes place over several days in mid-August, with dates varying by region. During this time, people take vacations and return to their ancestral homes to welcome visiting ancestral spirits.

Other national holidays include Coming of Age Day (also called Adults' Day, second Monday in January), National Foundation Day (11 Feb.), Vernal Equinox (in March), Maritime Day (third Monday in July), Respect for the Aged Day (third Monday in September), Autumnal Equinox (in September), Health and Sports Day (second Monday in October), Culture Day (3 Nov.), Labor Thanksgiving Day (23 Nov.), and Emperor Akihito's Birthday (23 Dec.).